Stevanovich Institute on the Formation of Knowledge

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Faculty Members

- Clifford Ando, David B. and Clara E. Stern Professor; Professor of Classics, History and Law
- Shadi Bartsch-Zimmer, Helen A. Regenstein Distinguished Service Professor of Classics and the Program in Gender Studies
- Claudia Brittenham, Assistant Professor of Art History
- Simeon Chavel, Assistant Professor of Hebrew Bible, Divinity School
- Whitney Cox, Associate Professor of South Asian Languages and Civilizations
- Arnold Davidson, Robert O. Anderson Distinguished Service Professor in the Department of Philosophy, the Department of Comparative Literature, the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, the Committee on the Conceptual and Historical Studies of Science, and the Divinity School
- Ahmed El-Shamsy, Assistant Professor, NELC
- Jas' Elsner, Visiting Professor of Art History
- Jack Gilbert, Associate Professor Ecology & Evolution, Evolutionary Biology
- Tom Ginsburg, Leo Spitz Professor of International Law, Ludwig and Hilde Wolf Research Scholar, and Professor of Political Science
- Andreas Glaeser, Professor of Sociology
- John Goldsmith, Edward Carson Waller Distinguished Service Professor, Departments of Linguistics and Computer Science; Senior Fellow, Computation Institute of Argonne National Laboratory and the University of Chicago Committee on Computational Neuroscience
The Stevanovich Institute on the Formation of Knowledge opens in the fall of 2015 and will move into fully operational mode in October 2016. Our mission is to unite scholars from many different fields to study the process of knowledge formation and transmittal from antiquity to the present day and, in correlation, to explore how this history shapes our modern world. The Institute functions as a research laboratory and incubator for University of Chicago faculty and visiting scholars, and offers support for affiliated PhD students and post-doctoral scholars.

The questions we ask include: What are the sites from which discourses of knowledge emerge and derive legitimacy? What is the impact of the conditions and restrictions upon the constitution of knowledge, its circulation, and its transmission to the future? How are (and were) political life, religious belief, and scientific exploration shaped by assumptions about what knowledge is?
Stevanovich Institute on the Formation of Knowledge Courses

KNOW 40101. Textual Knowledge & Authority: Biblical & Chinese Literature. 100 Units.
Ancient writers and their patrons exploited the textual medium, the virtual reality it can evoke and the prestige it can command to promote certain categories of knowledge and types of knowers. This course will survey two ancient bodies of literature, Hebrew and Chinese, for the figures they advance, the perspectives they configure, the genres they present, and the practices that developed around them, all in a dynamic interplay of text and counter-text. Excerpts from Hebrew literature include (a) royal wisdom in Proverbs & Ecclesiastes; (b) divine law in Exodus 19–24, Deuteronomy, and the Temple Scroll; and (c) other works found among the Dead Sea scrolls. Readings from Chinese literature include (d) speeches from the Shang shu (Book of Documents), (e) odes from the Shi jing (Book of Songs), and (f) commentaries from Han to Qing periods that elucidate, often in contradictory terms, the law-giving properties of these texts.
Instructor(s): Simeon Chavel / Haun Saussy Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): BIBL 50805

KNOW 40201. Reason and Religion. 100 Units.
The quarrel between reason and faith has a long history. The birth of Christianity was in the crucible of rationality. The ancient Greeks privileged this human capacity above all others, finding in reason the quality wherein man was closest to the gods, while the early Christians found this viewpoint antithetical to religious humility. As religion and its place in society have evolved throughout history, so have the standing of, and philosophical justification for, non-belief on rational grounds. This course will examine the intellectual and cultural history of arguments against religion in Western thought from antiquity to the present. Along the way, of course, we will also examine the assumptions bound up in the binary terms "religion" and "reason."
Instructor(s): Shadi Bartsch and Robert Richards Terms Offered: Winter
Prerequisite(s): Consent required: Email sbartsch@uchicago.edu a few sentences describing your background and what you hope to get out of this seminar.
Equivalent Course(s): DVPR 46616, CLAS 46616, CHSS 40201, CDIN 40201
KNOW 40301. The Discovery of Paganism. 100 Units.
How do we know what we know about ancient religions? Historians of religion often begin by turning to texts: either sacred texts, or, in the absence of such scriptures, descriptions of belief and practice by observers from outside the faith. Archaeologists focus their attention on the spaces and traces of religious practice—or at least those that survive—while art historians begin by examining images of deities and religious rites. Yet we often fail to see the extent to which the questions which we ask of all of these diverse sources are conditioned by Christian rhetoric about pagan worship. In this course, we compare two moments when Christians encountered “pagans”: during the initial Christian construction of a discourse on paganism (and, more broadly, a discourse on religion) during the late Roman Empire and during the Spanish discovery of the New World. Our course examines silences and absences in the textual and material records, as well as the divergences between texts and objects, in order to further our understanding of ancient religious practice. We will begin to see the many ways in which, as scholars of religion, we are in effect still Christian theologians, paving the way for new approaches to the study of ancient religion.
Instructor(s): Clifford Ando and Claudia Brittenham Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): HREL 40301, CLAS 44916, LACS 40301, HMRT 64202, ARTH 40310, CDIN 40301

KNOW 41401. Science meets literature: Elias Canetti’s Auto-da-Fé and human. 100 Units.
In this graduate seminar we will read the 1935 novel Auto-da-Fé by Elias Canetti (1981 Nobel Prize for Literature) and discuss it from the perspectives of different disciplines such as psychology and psychoanalysis, anthropology and sociology, history and philosophy, and literary criticism. One of the main themes of the seminar will be the relationship between Canetti’s representation of human mental and social processes in the novel and our current understanding of the human mind and human interpersonal relationships (e.g., understanding other minds, interpersonal communication, power dynamics, etc.).
Instructor(s): Maestripieri, D. Terms Offered: Winter
Note(s): CHDV Distribution, 1*, 2*, 5*
Equivalent Course(s): GRMN 48417, CHDV 48420
**KNOW 41402. Sem: Patronage & Cultr in Renaissance Italy & Her Neighbors 1. 100 Units.**

A two-quarter research seminar; the first quarter may be taken separately as a colloquium with the instructor’s permission. The great works of literature, philosophy, art, architecture, music, and science which the word "Renaissance" invokes were products of a complex system of patronage and hierarchy, in which local, personal, and international politics were as essential to innovation as ideas and movements. This course examines how historians of early modern Europe can strive to access, understand, and describe the web of hierarchy and inequality that bound the creative minds of Renaissance Europe to wealthy patrons, poor apprentices, distant princes, friends and rivals, women and servants, and the many other agents, almost invisible in written sources, who were vital to the production and transformation of culture.

Instructor(s): A. Palmer
Terms Offered: Autumn
Prerequisite(s): Grad students only; can be taken as a 1-qtr colloquium with permission.
Equivalent Course(s): CLAS 45116, HIST 81503

**KNOW 41403. Sem: Patronage & Cultr in Renaissance Italy & Her Neighbors 2. 100 Units.**

The second quarter is mainly for graduate students writing a seminar research paper.

Instructor(s): A. Palmer
Terms Offered: Winter
Prerequisite(s): HIST 81503
Equivalent Course(s): CLAS 45117, HIST 81504
Font Notice

This document should contain certain fonts with restrictive licenses. For this draft, substitutions were made using less legally restrictive fonts. Specifically:

Times was used instead of Trajan.

Times was used instead of Palatino.

The editor may contact Leepfrog for a draft with the correct fonts in place.